



American Center Director Chad Cummins prepares to respond to a question posed by a student of Delhi Public School, Siliguri.



## BULLETIN - JUNE 2011



### Events at a Glance

#### June 2

**Program:** Inter-school environment quiz (Kolkata)

#### June 3

**Program:** Green Biz Quiz (Kolkata)

#### June 3

**Program:** Libraries and information technology (Kolkata)

#### June 5

**Program:** Walk for the environment (Kolkata)

#### June 30

**Film Show:** *The Namesake* (Kolkata)

### "Oscar Fridays" Film Festival, American Center 4:30 p.m.

June 3: *The Social Network*

June 10: *Black Swan*

June 17: *Inception*

June 24: *The Fighter*

### Your Date With U.S. History

### THE ISLAMIC CENTER OF WASHINGTON

June 28, 1957, marks the dedication of the impressive Islamic Center of Washington. Prominently situated along Embassy Row in the U.S. capital city, the mosque often is considered the symbol of the Muslim community in America.

The idea for the mosque occurred to prominent businessman and contractor A.J. Howar at the 1944 funeral of a Turkish diplomat. Howar was a Palestinian immigrant, a Muslim whose name had been

Yousef Abu El Hawa before he came to America. During the funeral, Howar said to the ambassador of Egypt, Mahmoud Hassan Pasha, "Isn't it a shame that the prayer for such a great Muslim is not held in a mosque?" The ambassador's reply was to ask Howar to help build one.

The men formed a foundation to raise money and support, and the mosque was finished in 1957. Donations came from Muslim communities in the United States and from Afghanistan, Egypt, Indonesia, Iraq, Iran, Syria, Turkey, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. At the dedication, President Dwight D. Eisenhower said: "America would fight with her whole strength for your right to have here your own church and worship according to your own conscience. This concept is indeed a part of America, and without that concept we would be something else than what we are."

Italian architect Mario Rossi designed the building. He had worked for years as assistant to a famous Italian, Ernesto Verucci Bey, who was Egypt's chief court architect. Egypt sent the workmen who crafted the Quranic verses that adorn the mosque's walls and ceiling. The Islamic Center is a global edifice. Egypt donated a magnificent chandelier; Iran, an extraordinarily well-made, very large carpet; Malaysia, the dome; Morocco, the stained glass windows; Turkey, blue tiles; and Iraq, yellow glass.

Mahama Bawa of Washington, a regular worshipper at the Center, says the mosque is "very good for concentration and prayer. 'Go there,' he says, 'and it evokes in you a sense of spirituality and submission, a prayerful mood.'" According to Scott Hartmann, another regular visitor to the Islamic Center, "the essence of this iconic Washington landmark is that it is at once a reflection of the universality of the American experience--at any time of day you will find worshippers that reflect the true diversity of the country--and at the same time shows how seriously our country is committed to the right of all people to express their faith."

Source: [www.america.gov](http://www.america.gov)



### ALLEN GINSBERG



Anti-tradition poet Allen Ginsberg, born on June 3, 1926, heralded originality as the new tradition. The break from tradition gathered momentum during the 1957 obscenity trial of Allen Ginsberg's poem *Howl*. When the San Francisco customs office seized the book, its publisher, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, brought a lawsuit. During that notorious court case, famous critics defended *Howl* on the basis of the poem's literary merit. *Howl*'s triumph over the censors helped propel the rebellious Beat poets--especially Ginsberg and his friends Jack Kerouac and William Burroughs--to fame.

[www.facebook.com/AmericanCenter.Kolkata](http://www.facebook.com/AmericanCenter.Kolkata)



**American Center Kolkata steps into Social Media. Details inside.**

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Offices are open from 8 am - 5 pm; Monday - Friday  
The American Library is open from 10 am - 6 pm, Monday - Saturday

**YOUR TURN**

*The Bulletin wants to hear from you ... your thoughts, your opinions, your feedback. Write in with*



*--a report of an American Center event you attended*

*--your experiences in cross-cultural encounters*

*--a photo that brings out the joys and sorrows of human life*

*--a human interest anecdote.*

*Only email submissions will be considered for publication. The Bulletin reserves the right of submission selection, editing and publication.*

*Send your submissions by email to [kolkatapas@state.gov](mailto:kolkatapas@state.gov) by the 10th of each month.*

**NOTES FROM THE FIELD**

Priyanka Das, a student at Burdwan University, recounts her experience of an American Literature Study Circle seminar: "The film clips and other clippings, and the spontaneous comments of the audience did justice to the commemoration of Black History Month."



The photograph shows a presenter at the seminar making a point.

**Inter School Green Quiz**

Kolkata: June 2, 11 a.m.



To create awareness about clean environment among children--the future citizens of Planet Earth, the American Center and the Anti Pollution Society of India will organize an Inter School Green Quiz. Students from various city schools and colleges will take part in this Inter School Green Quiz program.

**Contact: 3984-6337 or [pattanayakpr@state.gov](mailto:pattanayakpr@state.gov)**

**Green Biz Quiz**

Kolkata: June 3

The Indian Chamber of Commerce, in association with the American Center, will organize a Green Biz Quiz involving corporate executives at the Indian Chamber of Commerce.



**Contact: 3984-6324 or [mullicksx@state.gov](mailto:mullicksx@state.gov)**

**Virtual Library: Challenges and Choices**

Kolkata: June 3



Linda Parker, Information Resource Officer, India, Nepal, Bangladesh & Sri Lanka will join librarians and readers in the eastern region to explore how technology is changing the way society gains information, the challenges in ensuring that access remains universal, and the choices that librarians in particular and society in general, will make to resolve these challenges. The seminar will be held at the American Center.

**Contact: 3984-6399 or [mukhotymx@state.gov](mailto:mukhotymx@state.gov)**

**Walk for the environment**

Kolkata: June 5, 8 a.m.

Observe World Environment Day by walking with the American Center, Victoria Memorial, ITC Sonar, Leadership Training Service, and Indo American Society, from the American Center to Victoria Memorial.



**Contact: 3984-6392 or [dassx@state.gov](mailto:dassx@state.gov)**

**All programs are subject to change. Please confirm closer to the date of the event.**

Film Show:

**THE NAMESAKE**

(122 mins)

June 30, 3 p.m.:  
Kolkata

Directed by Mira Nair, this is the story of the Ganguli family whose move from Calcutta to New York evokes a lifelong balancing act to meld into a new world without forgetting the old. Though parents Ashoke and Ashima (Irrfan Khan, Tabu) long for the family and culture that enveloped them in India, they take great pride in the opportunities their sacrifices have afforded their children. Paradoxically, their son Gogol (Kal Penn) is torn between finding his own unique identity without losing his heritage. Even Gogol's name represents the family's journey into the unknown.

Contact: 3984-6336 or [ghoshdx@state.gov](mailto:ghoshdx@state.gov)

**FOCUS:****GWEN ROBBINS SCHUG, BIOARCHAEOLOGIST**

Gwen Robbins Schug, Fulbright-Nehru Senior Research Fellow and Assistant Professor of Biological Anthropology at Appalachian State University in Boone, North Carolina, reflects on her India experience as follows: "I use human skeletal remains from archaeological sites as a source of evidence about India's past. I came to Kolkata for 6 months with my two children (Felix, 8, and Isaac, 6) who have taught me to see India through fresh eyes again, as if I had never been here before. Here are two examples of the way we have grown from our experience in India."



One of the first things the children had to accept was that people constantly talk to them, touch them, hug and kiss them. This is something that has long since disappeared in American life. Learning to accept it affected them deeply. They have less opportunity to remain focused solely on themselves as private individuals and they have developed a sense of what it means to be part of a larger world. They have learned something about the power of community.

They watch everyone and note social rules, interactions, customs. From this, they have understood that the meaning of basic things, normally taken for granted, can change across cultures--the color white, the smell of cow dung, the sound of a street procession, the taste of milk, even love and marriage. They have suggested to me that one cannot judge the significance of an act or a person only by looking at their behavior, particularly not when you come from halfway around the world--such a powerful truth. Understanding relativity in this way will profoundly deepen their

view of the world around them as they mature."

Above: Felix plays the flute at the Milan Mela, Kolkata, while a curious audience looks on.

**COMPELLING ADDITIONS TO THE AMERICAN LIBRARY'S COLLECTION**

**BIRD** by Clint Eastwood. Actors: Forest Whitaker, Diane Venora and others. 1988. 2001. 161 minutes. Clint Eastwood brings a lifelong love of jazz to, and won a Best Director Golden Globe Award for, this gripping story of pioneering jazzman Charlie "Yardbird" Parker. Like a spellbinding jazz riff, past and future overlap as the movie explores Bird's soaring skill and destructive excesses. Bird comes alive most mightily on its soundtrack, honored with a Best Sound Academy Award. In Eastwood's hands, *Bird* truly, stunningly lives.



**THE COURT JESTER** by Melvin Frank & Norman Panama. Actors: Danny Kaye, Glynis Johns & Angela Lansbury. 1999. 101 minutes. Possibly the funniest musical comedy ever made, the film contains some excruciatingly funny scenes, including the classic "Flagon with the dragon" routine. Between swordplay and wordplay, Danny Kaye displays his fancy footwork and his comic genius. With a stellar supporting cast, including Glynis Johns, Angela Lansbury and Mildred Natwick, Kaye sings and dances among dueling knights and damsels in distress. Through it all, this jester proves he's one of the original kings of comedy.

**PROGRAMS ORGANIZED BY THE UNITED STATES - INDIA EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION (USIEF)**

USIEF announces the 2012-2013 Fulbright-Nehru and other Fulbright fellowships for study, research, teaching and professional development in the U.S.  
<http://www.usief.org.in/Scripts/ForIndianNationalsOverview.aspx>



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## American Center's SMS service: Dial US4U at 9243000111

In keeping with the times, we are delighted to report the successful functioning of a new service--*Tunespray*. The best feature of this service is SMS notification to you about our upcoming programs. Apart from standard SMS notifications, this feature comes with some other useful tools:



- ★ SMS your participation in American Center events.
- ★ Give us feedback on events or policies.
- ★ Interact live with us regarding events through Text 2 Poll and Message Boards.
- ★ Voice your opinion through SMS.

To avail yourself of information on American Library membership, reference services, and programs, type: "US4U<space>LIBRARY 9243000111".

## American Center' Facebook Page [www.facebook.com/AmericanCenter.Kolkata](http://www.facebook.com/AmericanCenter.Kolkata)

In an age of social media, the American Center is delighted to report the successful functioning of its Facebook Page. This Page is designed not only to promote upcoming events, programs, interactive sessions, and releases of new books and articles at the American Center, but also to get feedback from our audiences through their active participation in online conversations and opinion polls.

To avail yourself of information about upcoming events or to interact with us, please visit our Facebook Page at the above-mentioned link and "Like" us to get yourself added to our page.

## WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY 2011: "FORESTS: NATURE AT YOUR SERVICE"

World Environment Day was established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1972 at the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment. Another resolution, adopted by the General Assembly the same day, led to the creation of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). Commemorated each year on June 5, World Environment Day is one of the principal vehicles through which the United Nations stimulates worldwide awareness of the environment and enhances political attention and action.



World Environment Day is designed to give a human face to environmental issues; empower people to become active agents of sustainable and equitable development; promote an understanding that communities are pivotal to changing attitudes towards environmental issues; and advocate partnership which will ensure all nations and peoples enjoy a safer and more prosperous future.

World Environment Day is a people's event. People around the globe celebrate with colorful activities such as street rallies, city-wide walks, scientific forums, bicycle parades, green concerts, essays and poster competitions in schools, tree plantings, as well as recycling and clean-up campaigns.

The theme of WED 2011 is "Forests: Nature at Your Service" and the global host country is India, a country in which forests constitute more than 20 percent of geographical land mass. The American Center Kolkata celebrates WED 2011 through a variety of programs, including quiz sessions on June 2 and 3, and a walk to the Victoria Memorial on June 5.

Source: <http://www.rona.unep.org>

## MAY IN PICTURES



A student responds to a question at a Spelling Bee organized by the American Center at Guwahati.



A school teacher tests the soil at a site in Guwahati as part of a Global Learning and Observations to Benefit the Environment (GLOBE) program.



The media interviews noted Bengali litterateur Shankar on the occasion of the inauguration of a Bengali section in the American Library.



Participants enjoy a dance on the occasion of Cinco de Mayo at the Hotel Astor, Kolkata.

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